

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (currently amended) An antimicrobial, tubular, single- or multilayer polymer-based plastics foodstuff casing premoistened so as to be ready-to-fill, which comprises, as antimicrobial constituent, an alkyl para-hydroxybenzoate and/or a salt thereof.
2. (currently amended) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the alkyl para-hydroxybenzoate or its salt contains from 1 to 10, ~~preferably from 1 to 6, particularly preferably from 2 to 5,~~ carbon atoms in the an alkyl moiety.
3. (currently amended) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 1 ~~or 2~~, wherein the alkyl para-hydroxybenzoate and/or its salt has been combined with at least one other antimicrobial agent.
4. (currently amended) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 3, wherein the other antimicrobial agent is an agent which reduces water activity, ~~i.e. a<sub>w</sub> value.~~
5. (original) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 4, wherein the agent which reduces water activity is glycerol or propanediol.
6. (currently amended) The foodstuff casing as claimed in ~~one or more of claim[[s]] 1 to 5,~~ wherein an inner side has been thereof is impregnated with at least one component which improves peelability.
7. (original) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 6, wherein the component which improves peelability is a cellulose derivative or starch derivative, an alginate, or chitosan.
8. (currently amended) A process for the production of the foodstuff casing as claimed in ~~one or more of claim[[s]] 1 to 7,~~ which comprises premoistening the casing with an

aqueous solution in which the proportion of all of the antimicrobial agents together is from 0.1 to 8% by weight, ~~preferably from 0.2 to 2% by weight~~ based on the weight of the solution.

9. (currently amended) The process as claimed in claim 8, wherein the alkyl para-hydroxybenzoate and/or its salt is applied in one step with the water serving for premoistening ~~to the~~ an inner and/or outer side of the ~~tubular film~~ casing.
10. (original) The process as claimed in claim 9, wherein the aqueous solution is applied by spraying.
11. (currently amended) The process as claimed in claim 10, wherein the aqueous solution is applied with the aid of a spray mandrel to ~~the~~ an inner side of the casing, while ~~[[it]]~~ said casing is shirred.
12. (original) The process as claimed in claim 11, wherein the aqueous solution comprises at least one component which makes the casing easy to peel.
13. (currently amended) ~~The use of the foodstuff casing as claimed in one or more of claims 1 to 7 as~~ A synthetic sausage-casing comprising a casing of claim 1.

Please add the following new claims:

14. (new) A casing of claim 2 having 1 to 6 carbon atoms in the alkyl moiety.
15. (new) A casing of claim 2 having 2 to 5 carbon atoms in the alkyl moiety.
16. (new) The foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 2, wherein the alkyl para-hydroxybenzoate and/or its salt has been combined with at least one other antimicrobial agent.
17. (new) A process of claim 8, wherein said antimicrobial agents are present in a proportion from 0.2 to 2% by weight based on the weight of the solution.

18. (new) A process for the production of the foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 2, which comprises premoistening the casing with an aqueous solution in which the proportion of all of the antimicrobial agents together is from 0.1 to 8% by weight, based on the weight of the solution.

19. (new) A process for the production of the foodstuff casing as claimed in claim 3, which comprises premoistening the casing with an aqueous solution in which the proportion of all of the antimicrobial agents together is from 0.1 to 8% by weight, based on the weight of the solution.

20. (new) A synthetic sausage-casing comprising a casing of claim 2.